

Assisted dying and palliative care: a reading list

March 2024

This list provides a selection of reading on assisted dying and on its interface with palliative care. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but may help in thinking around the subject.

Some of the papers listed below are available as open access, others are behind a paywall.

With thanks to Dr Naomi Richards, End of Life Studies Group at Glasgow University for a number of the reading suggestions listed here.

Want to know more about our work on assisted dying? Contact the Policy Team at policy@hospiceuk.org

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Reading suggestions

Background

Gajjar D, Hobbs A. Assisted dying. [POSTBrief 47]. UK Parliament; 2022. Available from: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PB-0047/POST-PB-0047.pdf>

Health and Social Care Select Committee. Assisted dying / assisted suicide. [29 Feb 2024, HC 321 2023-24] Available from:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/news/200140/mps-publish-report-on-assisted-dyingassisted-suicide/>

Irish Hospice Foundation. The international experience of assisted dying. [Vers. 3]. Dublin: Irish Hospice Foundation; 2023. Available from:

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/International-Experience-of-Assisted-Dying-V3-April-23.pdf>

Morton A, Malo H. Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: Briefing for hospice members. London: Hospice UK; 2024 Available from: <https://hospiceuk-files-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-03/AD%20Bill%20Briefing%20for%20Members%20Mar24.pdf>

Richards N, Krawczyk M. What is the cultural value of dying in an era of assisted dying? *Med Humanit*. 2021; 47(1):61-67. doi: 10.1136/medhum-2018-011621. Epub 2019 Jul 26.

The interface with palliative care

Gerson SM, Gamondi C, Wiebe E, Deliens L. Should palliative care teams be involved in medical assisted dying? *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2023 Aug;66(2):e233-e237. doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2023.04.004. Epub 2023 Apr 16.

Gerson SM, Koksvik GH, Richards N, Materstvedt LJ, Clark D. Assisted dying and palliative care in three jurisdictions: Flanders, Oregon, and Quebec. *Ann Palliat Med*. 2021; 10(3):3528-3539. doi: 10.21037/apm-20-632. Epub 2020 Dec 4.

Gerson SM, Koksvik GH, Richards N, Materstvedt LJ, Clark D. The relationship of palliative care with assisted dying where assisted dying is lawful: a systematic scoping review of the literature. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2020; 59(6):1287-1303.e1. doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2019.12.361. Epub 2019 Dec 24.

Ho A, Norman JS, Joolae S, Serota K, Twells L, William L. How does medical assistance in dying affect end-of-life care planning discussions? Experiences of Canadian multidisciplinary palliative care providers. *Palliat Care Soc Pract*. 2021; 15:26323524211045996. doi: 10.1177/26323524211045996. Erratum in: *Palliat Care Soc Pract*. 2021 Nov 7;15:26323524211060145.

International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC). Special issue on assisted dying practices. *IAHPC Newsletter*. 2023; 24(4) April, Suppl. Available from:

<https://hospicecare.com/what-we-do/publications/special-issues/assisted-dying-practices/>

Kirchhoffer DG, Lui C, Ho A. Moral uncertainty and distress about voluntary assisted dying prior to legalisation and the implications for post-legalisation practice: a qualitative study of palliative and hospice care providers in Queensland, Australia. *BMJ Open* 2023;13:e065964. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-065964

Mathews JJ, Hausner D, Avery J, Hannon B, Zimmermann C, Al-Awamer A. Impact of medical assistance in dying on palliative care: A qualitative study. *Palliat Med*. 2021; 35(2):447-454. doi: 10.1177/0269216320968517. Epub 2020 Oct 30.

Radbruch L, Leget C, Bahr P, Müller-Busch C, Ellershaw J, de Conno F, Vanden Berghe P; Board Members of EAPC. Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide: A white paper from the European Association for Palliative Care. *Palliat Med*. 2016; 30(2):104-16. doi: 10.1177/0269216315616524. Epub 2015 Nov 19.

Shapiro GK, Tong E, Nissim R, Zimmermann C, Allin S, Gibson JL, et al. Perspectives of Canadian health leaders on the relationship between medical assistance in dying and palliative and end-of-life care services: a qualitative study. *CMAJ*. 2024;196(7):E222-E234. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.231241.

White BP, Archer M, Haining CM, Willmott L. Implications of voluntary assisted dying for advance care planning. *Med J Aust*. 2024; 220(3):129-133. doi: 10.5694/mja2.52183. Epub 2023 Dec 12.

Wright DK, Chan LS, Fishman JR, Macdonald ME. "Reflection and soul searching": Negotiating nursing identity at the fault lines of palliative care and medical assistance in dying. *Soc Sci Med*. 2021;289:114366. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114366. Epub 2021 Sep 3.

Health professionals' experience of providing assisted dying

Bustin H, Jamieson I, Seay C, Reid K. A meta-synthesis exploring nurses' experiences of assisted dying and participation decision-making. *J Clin Nurs*. 2023 Dec 6. doi: 10.1111/jocn.16949. Epub ahead of print.

Rutherford J, Willmott L, & White B P. What the doctor would prescribe: physician experiences of providing voluntary assisted dying in Australia. *Omega*. 2023; 87(4): 1063-1087. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228211033109>

Snelling J, Young J, Beaumont S. et al. Health care providers' early experiences of assisted dying in Aotearoa New Zealand: an evolving clinical service. *BMC Palliat Care*. 2023; 22, 101. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12904-023-01222-4>

Conscientious objection / participation

Haining CM, Keogh LA. "I haven't had to bare my soul but now I kind of have to": describing how voluntary assisted dying conscientious objectors anticipated approaching conversations with patients in Victoria, Australia. *BMC Med Ethics*. 2021; 22(1):149. doi: 10.1186/s12910-021-00717-0.

Pesut B, Thorne S, Greig M. Shades of gray: Conscientious objection in medical assistance in dying. *Nurs Inq.* 2020; 27(1):e12308. doi: 10.1111/nin.12308. Epub 2019 Jul 4.

Rutherford J. Conscientious participants and the ethical dimensions of physician support for legalised voluntary assisted dying. *J Med Ethics.* 2021;47:e11. doi: 10.1136/medethics-2020-106702.

Impact on bereavement

Andriessen K, Krysinska K, Castelli Dransart DA, Dargis L, Mishara BL. Grief after euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. *Crisis.* 2020 Jul;41(4):255-272. doi: 10.1027/0227-5910/a000630. Epub 2019 Oct 28.

Laperle P, Achille M, Ummel D. To lose a loved one by medical assistance in dying or by natural death with palliative care: a mixed methods comparison of grief experiences. *Omega (Westport).* 2022 Apr 14:302228221085191. doi: 10.1177/00302228221085191. Epub ahead of print.

Singer J, Daum C, Evans A, Schneider S, Vugrin M, Loggers E. An examination and proposed theoretical model of risk and protective factors for bereavement outcomes for family members of individuals who engaged in medical aid in dying: A systematic review. *Palliat Med.* 2023; 37(7):947-958. doi: 10.1177/02692163231172242. Epub 2023 May 2.

Position statements from national UK organisations

Along with statements from national hospice and palliative care organisations, this list also includes position statements issued by national bodies representing various health professions which could be impacted if assisted dying were to be legalised.

Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland (APM). Their position statement published in 2020 can be found on the physician assisted dying resources page of APM's website: <https://apmonline.org/news-events/apm-physician-assisted-dying-web-materials/>

British Medical Association (BMA). The BMA's current position on physician assisted suicide was established in 2021 – see: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/end-of-life/physician-assisted-dying>

Hospice UK. Read our position statement on assisted dying at: <https://www.hospiceuk.org/assisted-dying>

Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). In 2023 the RCGP gave the go-ahead for a working group to be set up to ensure that the College is prepared for any potential changes in the law on assisted dying across the UK. Find out more at: <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/representing-you/policy-areas/assisted-dying>

Royal College of Nursing (RCN). The RCN's position on assisted dying, published 2023, is available from: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Position-statements/rcn-position-on-assisted-dying>

Royal College of Physicians (RCP). The RCP clarified its position on assisted dying in 2019 – find out more at: <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/rcp-clarifies-its-position-assisted-dying>

Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS). The RPS published its policy statement on assisted dying in 2021 and this includes discussion of palliative and end of life care. See: <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/policy-a-z/assisted-dying>

National palliative care plans in some countries where assisted dying is legalised

The palliative care strategies listed here are from English-speaking countries.

Australia

Voluntary assisted dying laws have been enacted in the six Australian states and legislation will soon be considered in the Australian Capital Territory.

Department of Health. National palliative care strategy 2018. [Canberra]: Australian Government. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/the-national-palliative-care-strategy-2018>

Canada

Assisted dying was legalised in Canada in 2016.

Health Canada. Action plan on palliative care: building on the framework of palliative care in Canada. Ottawa: Health Canada; 2018 Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-care-system/reports-publications/palliative-care/action-plan-palliative-care.html>

New Zealand

Assisted dying became legal in New Zealand in 2021.

Ministry of Health. The New Zealand palliative care strategy. Wellington: Ministry of Health; 2001. Available from: <https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/publications/the-new-zealand-palliative-care-strategy/>

Find more reading on the topic

This selection of literature databases - which are free to use - can help you to find further research on the topic.

Read our tips on how to do a literature search

<https://www.hospiceuk.org/innovation-hub/clinical-care-support/extending-frailty-care-programme/how-do-literature-search-6-easy-steps>

CareSearch

Offers access to a curated collection of reviews in palliative care. This includes a collection on voluntary assisted dying. CareSearch is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

Available from: <https://www.caresearch.com.au/Evidence/Searching-for-Evidence/Systematic-Review-Collection>

What is a systematic review?

Systematic reviews seek to collate evidence that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria in order to answer a specific research question. They aim to minimize bias by using explicit, systematic methods documented in advance with a protocol.¹

PubMed

A database of more than 35 million citations for biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books.

Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

Trip

A clinical search engine designed to allow users to quickly and easily find and use high-quality research evidence to support their practice and/or care.

Available from: <https://www.tripdatabase.com/Home>

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Data classification: Operational. Circulation is restricted for internal and members' use only.

Compiled by Melanie Taylor, Head of Information Support, March 2024.

¹ Higgins JPT, Thomas J, Chandler J, Cumpston M, Li T, Page MJ, Welch VA (eds.). Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions version 6.4 (updated August 2023). Cochrane, 2023. Available from www.training.cochrane.org/handbook